THE NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

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U. OF PENNSYLVANIA
OCT 31 1947
PERIODICAL DEPT.

Dinner Meeting Notice

The CEA Sunday evening eeting (dinner, entertainent, and address) will be ld in the Chateau Room at e Claypool Hotel. Tickets e priced at $1.50. Because e Hotel must know the approximate number of diners fore Sunday, December 28, servations must be made in vance. Please send notice reach George S. Wykoff, partment of English, Pure University, Lafayette, diana, by Friday evening, cember 26.

at Books?

have been hearing much of en greatest books. If you were marooned on a desert island, books would you take along? you have room for only ten, rror in judgment is serious. classics would you choose, if Which of the popular varicould you not be without? poetry? What fiction? What a?

ur choice and mine, most forely, are not going to be the There is no magic measuring for determining *the* great Actually those that meet the idual's needs most adequately or him the best books. This of e implies that one knows what eeds are and can judge for lf whether or not they are adequately met. But to be dogmatic than that is to afhat all mature readers should he same things.

w suppose that a sophomore vocational curriculum has one ter and one semester only in to acquaint himself with literature. He is destined to arooned rather effectively in rld of unimagined facts and s. Here is his one chance to ff and beyond. What can we him to take along?

at we do select for him must t for his needs, just as what elect for ourselves must be. we give him must have an diate appeal, for he is some- of a beginner. But at the time it must have a lasting l; for we want him to feel its , wish for more, and thereby means of escape from his iso-

s unlettered sophomore is a iar figure on the American us. He is, I think, more of a m than the English major. we are becoming more and prone to talk shop, I should o see an expression of opinion rning the best means of meetthis challenge. Shall it be gh an anthology ranging from lf to Sandburg? Or shall it a selection of separate books as are bought and sold and wed in the world at large?

If the latter is the method, then the problem of the selection still remains. What novels, what plays, what poems are to be desired? One is inclined to say that there are many good books. But to name those specifically suited to accomplish the objective is not easy.

Personally I like for this purpose *Kenilworth, The Return of the Native, The Octopus,* and the *Pocket Book of Short Stories* as fiction; *Romeo and Juliet, Strife,* and *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* as plays; *The Inn of Tranquility* as a group of essays; and for poems *John Brown's Body* and a group containing such things as *The Eve of St. Agnes, My Last Duchess, The Dauber,* and *The Highwayman.* But this is only a poor beginning. Really what are the ten best books for the unlettered sophomore?

D. S. Mead
Pennsylvania State College

COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

Program of Annual Meeting, Indianapolis, December 28-29, 1941

Conference theme: What can teachers of English do to help preserve the democratic tradition in America?—with particular reference to freshman and sophomore courses

PROGRAM FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28

Palm Room, Claypool Hotel

4:00 P.M. Democratic Ideals as Presented in the Great Writers of the Past: George F. Reynolds, University of Colorado
Discussion, led by Homer H. Nugent, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

5:30 P.M. Business Meeting

7:00 P.M. Annual Dinner, Chateau Room, Claypool; Burges Johnson presiding
Readings from James Whitcomb Riley, Hoosier poet: by George E. Davis, Purdue University
Address: President Norman Foerster

(All teachers of English, whether or not members of CEA, are invited to attend. Price $1.50)

PROGRAM FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 29

Palm Room, Claypool Hotel

Chairman, J. Gordon Eaker
Kansas State Teachers College (Pittsburg)

10:00 A.M. The Influence of Democracy on Literary Standards: Clarence R. Decker, University of Kansas City
Discussion, led by Bertha M. Stearns, Wellesley College

11:00 A.M. The Values of Literature in the Present Crisis: William Blackburn, Duke University
Discussion, led by R. Balfour Daniels, University of Houston

CEA members who attend the Modern Language Association meetings on Monday and Tuesday are invited to make use of the Louis XIV Room, which has been assigned them from 4 to 6 each afternoon as a social gathering place. Invite your friends to meet you there!

The Program Committee: Irving L. Churchill (Coe College), Chairman; J. Gordon Eaker (Kansas State Teachers College); Arthur P. Hudson (University of North Carolina); Edith C. Johnson (Wellesley College); Henry C. F. Staunton (Notre Dame University).

The Local Committee: George S. Wykoff (Purdue University), Chairman; Victor C. Miller (Indiana State Teachers College); Russell Noyes (Indiana University); Alice Bidwell Wesenberg (Butler University).

(Additional Convention jottings will be found on Page 2)

CEA Nominating Committee

President Norman Foerster has appointed the following nominating committee, to report at the annual meeting in December:

Louise Pound, University of Nebraska (chairman); Sculley Bradley, University of Pennsylvania; Barry Cerf, Reed College; Anton A. Raven, Dartmouth College.

The committee will propose candidates for the offices of president, two vice-presidents, and three directors, the latter to serve for three years. Members desiring to make suggestions may address them to any member of the committee.

". . . By Yielding to the Tide"

The fate of our colleagues in Classics and Modern Languages should warn us that rearranging traditional materials for study, rehearsing successful pedagogic devices, and fretfully restating the old cultural faith mid hope and fear are but pleasant pastimes of no virtue. The trend is against us, and unless we adapt ourselves to new conditions, we are lost.

For a generation, college English teachers have emerged from graduate schools with skills increasingly inappropriate to the duties all but a few of them assume. And their consequent heartburn owes itself in large measure to their ignoring the primary and unmistakable fact about undergraduate teaching of English today.

This fact is, except in a few places, that college teachers must assume the burden 1) of grounding students in clear, coherent, grammatical expression of whatever they need to say, and 2) of training them by continuous and directed exercise in assimilating the essential content of a printed page of substantial value. If higher education is to have any meaning, it must build on this basis, and it can no longer assume it in freshmen. Most students who enter college write poorly and read sloppily.

But they can be trained to do both better, and they must be. There is desire and demand for such training, and relatively little call for literary interpretation, literary history, and linguistics. In the great mass of students dumped on English departments by the operations of public education, there are an enormous number without literary background or literary interest, and English departments make little change in them.

Why not accept the fact? Every teacher's experience will amply confirm it. Let "literary" courses be for those who elect them.

English departments must recognize their position, or resign themselves in the near future to a niche in the section of Fine Arts, while someone else does the job required. And the training of college English teachers must include more of the technique of teaching composition and reading. For with high schools dedicated in the main to "terminal education" and "education for better living," and with colleges attracting more students with less desire for a "general cultural background," if literacy at higher levels is to remain an ideal of college training, English departments must learn better how to teach reading and writing, and must assume such instruction as a fundamental task. If they do not, some other department will.

(Continued on Page 4)

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THE NEWS LETTER

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Burges Johnson, Union College	(1942)
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Rev. Hugh McCarron, Loyola	(1941)

Membership in the College English Association, including THE NEWS LETTER, $2.00 a year. Subscription for Non-Members and Libraries, $1.50.

What Matters Most?

What are intrinsic values in literary art, and which are the external and superficial ones? Of those values that are intrinsic, which ones are enduring and which are ephemeral? What are the ingredients in a piece of writing that will give the same pleasure to future generations as to contemporary readers?

These questions are not formed with the hope that someone may dash off an answer after a few moments of thought, or even after a year's labor, or the consideration of a lifetime. But such questioning helps to put into sharper contrast those characteristics of literature that absorb a deal too much of the time and attention of teachers and students.

In what year was a work of literary art created? What social forces were in operation that influenced its form and shape and character? What names have been given to the "school" to which its author unconsciously contributed it? To what extent did its publication influence the work of later artists in the same field? Finally, who actually did write it?

We teachers of literature have found it so intriguing to teach names and dates; to define romanticism, realism, neo-classicism; to discover parallels and "borrowings"; and we have found it so difficult to define beauty, and explain the emotional response of our own and succeeding generations, that our teaching tends to become over-weighted on the statistical side—regrettably so in the undergraduate years.

Cross Us Off the List

Publishing houses that are benevolently eager to publish the collected poems or essays or learned works of teachers are suddenly becoming articulate again. They are especially eager to give the college professor who only sporadically bursts into print an opportunity to burst impressively. Perhaps they know that their appeals to all of us mute and inglorious Miltons are abetted and sustained by college administrations, which are also eager to see in the Alumni Quarterly a long list of faculty publications.

Whatever their reasons for burgeoning now, these predatory publishers find that the college campuses of the country offer good hunting. The propositions they make to us vary only slightly in detail, but greatly in allurement of phrase. Generally, they have "noted with interest" something of ours that has appeared in a learned journal or in the poets' corner of the local newspaper, and they wonder whether we are not now ready to assemble the fragments.

The first communication says little about costs, although it may hint that there is to be a divided responsibility. The publisher is prepared to contribute a wealth of experience, trained editorial counsel, organized salesmanship, a wise distribution of review copies, and a listing of the book in his catalogues, which "are widely distributed." The author's share in this coöperative enterprise seems almost trivial by comparison: he pays the cost of printing and binding, and in return he receives a generous royalty on all copies sold.

We note with interest that such publishers live on their incomes with margin enough to rent comfortable offices in large cities and to send out circular letters to a far-flung sucker list without apparently selling very many books, if one may trust the reports of retail booksellers or the evidence of publishers' imprints on a library shelf.

—o—

The Second Chap Book

Mr. Gelett Burgess' essay, "Short Words Are Words of Might," which comprises the Chap Book accompanying this issue, is a *tour de force* especially appropriate at this time, when teachers are discussing "basic English" and "semantics."

Mr. Burgess has long insisted that mouth-filling words are less forceful, and in fact less effective for almost any purpose, than simple Anglo-Saxon; and he has proved this in his own distinguished record of authorship. Believing that this issue of the Chap Book may prove of service in more than one classroom, we have asked our publishers to have a supply available for orders in quantity. The price will be ten cents a copy, post paid.

—o—

We agree that a vast amount of inaccurate expression is the result of inaccurate thinking. And also that a writer will usually express himself more effectively if he really has something to say. But not so long ago we read this in a student paper: "Lady Macbeth told Macbeth to get into his night shirt. They both do this."

The thought here seems fairly simple, and what happened after a shocking murder—though it can be admitted that this detail is trivial—ought to be worth the telling. Dare we suggest that the student might have expressed it better if he had had a little more drill with the parts of speech and their function in the sentence?

—o—

Under "Books Received" the New York *Times* recently listed *Insults*, a 12mo volume described as an "anthology of scathing remarks and acid portraits." Political oratory, propaganda, reviewing, and other forms of applied composition being what they are, this might be a very practical text.

Convention Notes

● CEA Convention Headquarters are at the Claypool Hotel, Illinois and Washington Streets, Indianapolis. The Union Station (all trains) is two blocks south of the hotel on Illinois Street, and the Union Bus Terminal (all buses) is one block north of the hotel on Illinois Street. Taxicab fare from either station to the hotel is fifteen cents.

● A registration and information desk will be on the Mezzanine floor of the Claypool. All CEA members are requested to register there upon arrival. Literature pertaining to the convention, dinner tickets, and the like will be available at this desk.

● Room registration should be made at the hotel desk. Rates at the Claypool for CEA members are the same as for MLA members: For one person, $2.50; double bed, for two persons, $3.50; twin beds for two persons, $4.50. Reservations should be sent to the hotel in advance.

● General headquarters for the MLA convention, as well as the headquarters, rooms, and meeting places for the English sections of MLA, are also at the Claypool. The Romance and Germanic sections will meet at near-by hotels, the Lincoln and the Severin, respectively.

● The lighter entertainment at the CEA dinner on Sunday evening is to be "characteristic of the Hoosier country." The Local Committee has asked Professor George E. Davis of Purdue University to read some of the poems of James Whitcomb Riley. Although still included in anthologies, Riley has undoubtedly lost much of what was once a national appeal; but some of his poems, especially those in dialect, are almost a part of American folklore. In the Middle West he is still considered the common people's poet. Riley's home at 528 Lockerbie Street, Indianapolis, has been preserved as it was during his life, and is open to the public.

● One legitimate play, "Life with Father," will be in Indianapolis, at the English Theatre (one block north and one block east from the Claypool), December 25-31. Prices, including tax, are: $1.10, $1.65, $2.20, $2.75. Mail orders with self-addressed, stamped envelope, should be sent direct to the theatre.

● Restaurants: Atrium Cafe and Coffee Shop (both in the Claypool); Tuscany Room and Coffee Shop (both in the Lincoln Hotel across the street); Guaranty Cafeteria, 20 N. Meridian St.; Russet Cafeteria, 37 S. Meridian St.; Fendrick's Peasant Room, 114 N. Illinois St.; Seville Restaurant, 7 N. Meridian St.; Stegemeier's Grille, 114 N. Pennsylvania St.; Bamboo Inn (Chinese food), 39 Monument Circle; Canary Cottage (Southern cooking), 46 Monument Circle; The Philadelphia Oyster House (sea foods), 133 E. Market St.

● Points of interest in Indianapolis include: Indiana State Capitol, one block east and one block north of the Claypool; Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, 284½ feet high, on Monument Circle, one block east and one block north of the Claypool—elevator service to observation platform, small charge; Indiana World War Memorial Plaza and National Headquarters of the American Legion, north from Monument Circle; James Whitcomb Riley's home, 528 Lockerbie St., open 10-12, 2-4, daily, Sunday, 12-4, small fee; Benjamin Harrison Memorial Home, 1230 N. Delaware St., open 11-4, small fee; John Herron Art Institute, 110 East 16th St., open daily 9-5, Sunday 1-8, free on Wednesday and Sunday; Butler University, Sunset Avenue, daily 8-5, Sunday 1-5; Indiana University Medical Center, 702 Wilson St.; Booth Tarkington Home, 4270 N. Meridian St.; Scottish Rite Cathedral, on Meridian St., between North and Walnut Sts.

—o—

From the Mail-Bag

Dear Editor:

Will you pass this letter along, please, to "C. D.," author of "Here Is a Device that Has Worked," in the November NEWS LETTER? He may be interested to know (and, no doubt, will be pleased to know) that Kipling's four lines about his six serving men are quoted in and form the chief expression of the basic policy of the textbook in composition entitled *A Freshman Guide to Writing*, by Jefferson and Templeman. This book was published in 1935, and is now in its fifth (or possibly sixth) large printing.

"C. D." is right, as I can say from personal experience, in declaring that Kipling's serving men provide a practicable and productive classroom device.

THE NEWS LETTER, under capable and genial editorship, continues to be interesting and valuable.

William D. Templeman
University of Illinois

Our correspondent's request has been complied with, and no doubt "C. D." is pleased. No doubt also that "C. D." missed completely the valuable text referred to, which he might do very easily, for under the heading "English Language—Composition and Exercises," where Professor Templeman's book appears, Wilson's *Cumulative Book Index* has 158 entries for the five-year period, 1933-1937, an average of 33 a year. How satisfactory in every way if all the current offerings were advertised in THE NEWS LETTER!—Ed.

What's Your Idea?

Our October issue contained a notice informing new members of the CEA that they are invited to contribute whatever opinions, ideas, suggestions, or even notions on the teaching of college English that they may have. Naturally that goes for old members, too.

But if you please, let's have them short. Maybe they will be easier to write. Probably they will have more punch. And certainly they will be mighty easy for the editors to use.

Why Teach Advanced Composition?

We who sometimes sneer at skill courses and vocational training in colleges are inclined to overlook the fact that if our advanced composition courses are doing anything at all, they are teaching a skill barely used to produce anything worth producing. Unlike the home economics majors, our young writers are likely to produce what is more edible than nourishing.

Our advanced composition courses are filled with students who have nothing to say, who may never have anything to say, and who are learning to say it well. Perhaps it is because our highly trained young technicians have nothing to say that they either go out to teach a new generation of mute, inglorious Miltons or else sensibly straggle into business.

Teachers of advanced composition might well ask themselves what educational benefits are supposed to accrue from advanced composition. Maybe the training in technique is not meant to be used in producing anything worth producing. If not, could the benefits supposed to come from the study of advanced composition not be derived as well from the study of literature? Are they worth deriving? If so, are they worth the energy and time now consumed in deriving them? Since most undergraduates are not geniuses, perhaps our advanced composition courses amount to little more than the overrefining of mediocre talents.

I agree that a certain amount of training in technique is essential: at the very beginning of their course all students need a thorough grounding in the fundamentals of clear thinking and writing. But that is all that is necessary for a writer who has something to say—that and the study of the literary masters. Thereafter most students would benefit more from additional courses in history, philosophy, music, or the classics than from courses in the technique of the short story, the drama, or the radio broadcast.

Our students do not need as much practice as they now get in the techniques of self-expression. What they need is a self to express. For most undergraduate writers simply do not know enough.

William Sloane
Russell Sage College

Toward Common Sense

Literary Scholarship: Its Aims and Methods, by Norman Foerster, John C. McGalliard, René Wellek, Austin Warren, and Wilbur L. Schramm. The University of North Carolina Press, 1941.

This book is a notably successful attempt by a group of scholars and teachers at Iowa State University to take an inventory of the state of literary studies in America today, and to offer a program for the future development of these studies.

As such, it should be in the hands of all those who shape the policies and appoint the staffs of our departments of languages and literature—chairmen, heads, directors, deans, and presidents. It will help them to assay the scholarship and teaching of their departments, and will provide them with an admirably clear plan for revivifying the study of letters in their institutions.

The five writers here engaged represent different aspects of literary scholarship, but they are all informed by a common point of view. This view is best expressed by Professor Foerster in the first chapter, which is in part a review of the history of the study of letters in the American scene. He believes, with his colleagues, and persuasively compels us to follow him, that "We are now so far from the inspiriting sense of purpose and value which characterized the romantic and scientific revivals . . . that we have lost our bearings and that only a new orientation can bring us closer, once more, to literature and to life." His plea, stated briefly, is that we think of letters more as one of the great humanities along with philosophy and art, and that we think of it less as a field for scientific "research"; he would have us set up as a model for emulation a *Poet-philolog* like Erasmus, rather than that Renaissance herald of modern science, the author of the *Advancement of Learning*.

While all of Professor Foerster's colleagues seem to subscribe to this view, they naturally have to do so in varying degrees. Professor John C. McGalliard, in an extremely good chapter on Language is inevitably more sympathetic to scientific and historical methods of scholarship. Linguists, no doubt, know these matters already, but one can strongly recommend this chapter to the literary scholar, for he will find much there to help him.

The chapters on Literary History and Literary Criticism, written respectively by Professors Wellek and Warren, are in the main line of the book, and are both thoroughly well done. Especially is this true of Professor Wellek's paper. He draws upon a wide knowledge of the attempts in Europe to establish a great model for literary histories, especially the German attempts, and charts for us the various approaches that have been used in the past. With none of these approaches is he well satisfied, and he would have us build, through analysis and criticism of the separate great works of literature, a theory of development that will itself be art and literature. I confess that his proposal does not satisfy me. Perhaps there is no genuine orderly development in literature, but only a series of fresh beginnings. A more generous comment would be that Professor Wellek's vision of true literary history is so far in the future that it seems improbable that we shall ever achieve it.

The thesis of the whole book culminates in Professor Schramm's chapter on imaginative writing, which is a plea for healing the breach between the teacher of literature and the contemporary writer of it. There is no necessity for the scorn that each group holds for the other; or, to put the matter more positively, each would profit from association and sympathy with the other. This is undeniably true, but it needs repeating, and Professor Schramm repeats it with many pithy comments. Many readers will find it the most amusing chapter of the book. The whole is concluded by a very useful bibliography, made up of a chronological list of some twentieth-century studies dealing primarily with the aims and methods of literary scholarship.

One cannot conclude without expressing a keen sense of gratitude for the admirable work of Professor Foerster and his colleagues in clearing the ground and laying the foundations for the study of literature in the years ahead.

William C. DeVane
Yale University

Wry Face Department

Rough calculations based on data provided by the Treasury department indicate that dues paid to the CEA are now subject to a substantial discount. Here are the figures (they are approximate and are not guaranteed, but they are obtained from sources considered reliable):

If your net taxable income for 1941—after allowance for spouse and dependents and deductions for bad debts, capital losses, professional expenses such as membership in CEA, etc., etc.—is $100, the discount is 6%; if $500, 10%; if $2,000, 12%; if $3,000, 12%; up to $25,000, 48%, beyond which it seems needless to go.

The point is, pay those delinquent dues before the end of the year. William R. Richardson, Treasurer, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va., will be glad to receive your check for $2.00. The discounts are allowed by the Internal Revenue bureau, not the CEA, if you get what we mean.

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Appreciation by Ear

Opportunities for the effective use of the phonograph in courses in literary appreciation have been greatly increased during the past year. Especially noteworthy are the initial numbers of series inaugurated respectively by Harvard University and the Columbia Recording Corporation, under *NCTE* auspices.

Columbia's *Masterpieces of Literature*, Vol. I, "The Appreciation of Poetry," is a neat album of six double ten-inch records, containing readings by Norman Corwin. A teachers' manual accompanies it. For this album the aspects of poetry selected for illustration are rhythm, sounds, pictures, symbols, patterns, and themes. The illustrations, largely from modern American poetry, devoted to "pictures," as an example, are de la Mare's "Silver," Frost's "The Runaway," Cunningham's "A Wet Sheet and a Flowing Sea," Sandburg's "The Fog," Dickinson's "The Railway Train," Cawein's "Deserted," and Hardy's "In Time of the Breaking of Nations."

Harvard University's series includes six double twelve-inch records of readings by Robert Speaight from Shakespeare, Donne, Keats, Blake, Wordsworth, King, and Herbert. The Shakespeare record, as an example, records the prologues to Act III and Act IV of *Henry V*, and sonnets CVI, CVII, and CXXIX.

The Columbia recordings, intelligently organized, are primarily for high schools but could be used effectively in certain introductory college courses. The Harvard recordings are unquestionably on the college level. Both are examples of excellent mechanical reproduction of the human voice.

To my ear, however, neither Speaight nor Corwin contribute much to the reading of these poems which is beyond the ability of a well-trained English instructor. Speaight's enunciation and English pronunciation are exquisite, but strike me as belonging to the somewhat emasculate nineteenth-century tradition. Corwin's American English does not have the richness of Speaight, and it does have a certain boyish eagerness at times that is most unfortunate. Speaight is guilty of a mis-reading and several, so it seems to me, misinterpretations, but should be awarded the laurel.

The immense and very real advantage of these recordings is that they enable the instructor to put the phonograph on the desk and to take his proper place alongside his students.

Random notes: Frost's own reading of his "The Runaway," an *NCTE* release, is preferable to Corwin's. . . . The Columbia records are manufactured with a blank circle on the disc between poems, so that one can readily select and play only the poem that he wishes. This device should be generally adopted. . . . In every instance, I have found ear and eye better than ear alone. Accordingly, an inexpensive text—a ten or twenty-five cent pamphlet—should be available for each series. . . . If living poets were given the coaching they so often need and then permitted to read their own works, albums far more valuable than either of these would be produced.

Christmas suggestion: For a colleague's or your own children from two to ten years—a book-record selection from Stevenson's *Child's Garden of Verses*. The child may follow the verses, well read, in the brightly illustrated book. (David McKay Co., Philadelphia.)

H. O. Werner
Washington College

". . . By Yielding to the Tide"

(Continued from Page 1)

In practical details, what changes must be accepted? First, less thought of English composition as a departmental problem and more thought of it as a discipline in connection with other work that students do. Second, emphasis on the content of work read rather than on beauties and inspirational qualities and literary background. Third, for students of "general" interests, courses in good books by good men, without pre-requisites, and with no eye on graduate schools. Literary study has become too much of a cult. Fourth, recognition of the varying abilities of students and the varying length of time required to develop them as fully as possible in students of different abilities. There will still be time and demand for the conventional courses by those who wish to become special students of literature, and probably by others. But they are a small part, however important, of the physical job that must be done.

The necessity for new machinery and for the development of new techniques of instruction in such a revised program of study will arouse instant opposition from teachers, but they should consider the alternative. If by shifting emphasis and meeting new conditions, English departments can salvage much of the advanced work they most enjoy and feel to be most important; if they can continue to control their destinies and hold their important positions, are they not immeasurably better off than they will be as mere defenders of an ideal left stranded by time?

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